


HOUSEWIVES AND DOWNING STREET



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Housewives and Downing Street

AN AVERAGE WOMAN LOOKS AT
THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL
GOVERNMENT



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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

“THE foundations of the national glory are set in the homes of the people,” said His Majesty King George. Women, even more than men, will appreciate the truth of this remark, for women are the home-makers the world over. The home is the nucleus of the family and the families are the core of the State.

I have written this little book from the point of view of the women of this country. So much has been done for the homes of the people by the National Government that is not fully realised. The book does not aim at being comprehensive, for time and space would not permit of this. I have chosen from the work of the Government those achievements which appealed most strongly to me as a woman, as the head of a family and with a household of my own.

At the same time, I have endeavoured to review the subject in the light of a student of history, and wherever possible have checked facts and figures with the help of official documents.

J. B.

May 1935.

NOTE.—While the book was in process of going to press, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, for reasons of health, resigned the Premiership in favour of Mr. Baldwin.

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HOUSEWIVES AND DOWNING STREET

CHAPTER I

WHY WE HAVE A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

I

A WHOLE nation, if we look at it through the small end of a telescope, is just—a man and his wife.

Suppose the husband comes home and tells his wife that he is on the verge of ruin ! He would be ruined indeed if she were to say, “ Oh, nonsense ! Let’s forget about it, and go on as if nothing had happened.” Fortunately for everyone, women do not say that sort of thing. It sometimes needs the threat of disaster to bring out the best that is in a woman, and since ruin for a man must mean ruin for his wife and family also, a woman can be trusted to face that sort of situation.

Her reply—if I know her as I think I do—would be, “ Well, what can we do about it ? ” The husband has to make drastic economies on every hand in his business. The wife, on her part, has to “ set to ” and make sacrifices in their home. Small luxuries have to go ; housekeeping bills, dress bills, even education bills, important though they are, have to be cut down. The family has to prepare to meet some lean years as courageously and cheerfully as possible.

If the husband finds that, thanks to rigid economy, and to his methods of reorganisation, he has been saved from bankruptcy, that his family fortunes are once again on a sound financial basis, then the whole family has good reason to pat itself on the back.

Just such a situation as this had to be faced, not by one family, but by hundreds of thousands of families in this country in August 1931. Put in domestic terms, we, the national family, were spending far more than the head of the family was getting, and were drawing dangerously on our savings. The State, as a firm, was finding that its expenditure was far and away in excess of the firm's takings, and in order to keep business going, such inroads had been made, and were still being made, on capital that the firm's finances had got into a precarious position and the firm itself was faced with the prospect of closing down.

The finances of the country had been examined by a Commission under Sir George May. The Commission showed that if things continued in the way they were going, the country would find itself, in the years 1932-33, with bills to the amount of two hundred million pounds, and no money with which to pay them.

A country's budget, like a family budget, should have no bills left unpaid at the end of the year. Budgeting for a great country cannot be done as exactly as budgeting for a family and a household, and a little shortage in one year need not cause alarm. But the threatened shortage for the years referred to was enormous.

Onlookers in Europe had seen for some time that a crisis was coming in British financial affairs. England until then

had always been regarded abroad as, financially, the soundest nation in the world. Her credit stood high among the nations. For generations it has been one of the greatest reasons for national pride that so many foreign nationals have trusted English credit, and have invested so considerably in British concerns. Friendship for a country is one thing, but faith in that country's ability to take care of other people's money is another matter. In 1931, even before the publication of the May Report, there were rumours that Great Britain's financial position was entering on a difficult phase; that we were spending more than we were getting, and were running heavily into debt. People abroad began to be afraid that their investments were in danger, and foreigners who had money in British banks began to withdraw it.

At first this withdrawal of gold was but a thin trickle, but after the publication of the May Report, when it became known that the country might be faced with a deficit of two hundred million pounds, this trickle became a veritable stream of gold, pouring out as more and more foreign investments were withdrawn. In one fortnight alone, in July 1931, it is estimated that thirty-two million pounds in gold was withdrawn from the Bank of England !

Rumour in Europe whispered that England was faced with bankruptcy. Immediately and inevitably England's credit fell. The value of the pound went down. British people, who were abroad on holiday at the end of July and the beginning of August 1931, will remember their uneasy feelings, and the anxious enquiries they had to meet as to what was going to happen to England. The feelings were so similar to those felt by people who had been abroad in

July 1914, on the eve of the War, that hundreds of holiday-makers cut short their Continental holidays and came home.

By the middle of August the run on the banks had developed at an alarming rate. Gold continued to pour out of the country in a never-ending flow. English people could scarcely believe what they read or heard, for the English are unused to panics of this kind. The Bank of England found itself faced with a great crisis. So rapid had been the withdrawal of gold that Great Britain, instead of being the trustee country of the world, found herself in the position of being forced to secure a loan of fifty million pounds from the Bank of France and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to tide over the difficulties of the moment. This loan was soon exhausted, and it was necessary to secure another.

This was the crucial point in the whole story. With new loans the country could carry on, but the new loans were only forthcoming on certain conditions. The countries from whom we wished to borrow money would only agree to grant the loans if we would *give them assurances that we would put our finances in order, and so check our expenditure that we should be in a position to balance our next budget.* Without these assurances there would be no loans. And without the loans bankruptcy appeared to be ahead.

This was the crisis that the Labour Government, then in power, found itself facing in August 1931.

II

Were foreign countries justified in demanding assurances from us before they came to our help with loans?

To answer that question we must look at the situation in a purely business light. If a firm or an individual wants to borrow money, the borrower must be prepared to give guarantees that the borrowed money will not be spent foolishly, or lost. No bank, firm, nor individual can be expected to lend money without having good cause to believe that the debtors will be able to repay.

Our national expenditure at that time, however justified we might have felt it to have been, was far in excess of our income. It had increased by approximately sixty million pounds a year; and to meet this during the years 1929-31 we were borrowing frequently as much as a million pounds a week. A great deal of very good work had undoubtedly been done with this borrowed money, but we could not blame foreign lenders for asking—What limits are going to be placed on increased expenditure, and on borrowings to meet it, and when is it going to end?

The Cabinet, under Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, was called on to face this crisis, a crisis that those who were later Mr. MacDonald's political opponents made no attempt to hide.

On September 8th, Mr. Arthur Henderson, then the Labour Party's official leader and spokesman, said in Parliament: "I myself have admitted there was a crisis. I have never denied it"; and on the following day, Mr. Arthur Greenwood exclaimed, "We have been trembling on the very verge of national ruin."

Risks cannot be taken where the credit of a great country is at stake. It was of the utmost importance to obtain the loans. Assurances had, therefore, to be given, and of necessity they had to be of the nature demanded by the lenders.

The assurances were to take the form of promises to make radical cuts in national expenditure, particular reference, undoubtedly resented in some quarters, being made to our so-called excessive expenditure on Unemployment Insurance.

The United States of America, from whom we were asking a new loan, implied by their unveiled comments that they could feel no safety in money lent us while we were spending so many millions on our unemployed without, as it seemed to them, doing anything to mitigate the problem of unemployment. Unemployment, admittedly a world scourge, was increasing. Efforts to diminish it had been wholly unsuccessful, and the Labour Cabinet had grimly braced itself to seeing the rise of unemployment figures to the distressing number of three millions, which was the feared estimate for the end of the year. Our position was the more uncomfortable, because the United States of America, to whom we were turning for help, had no national policy of relief for her own unemployed (an omission which all enlightened people deplored). But facts were facts and could not be overlooked. We could not do without the money, and we could not get the money except on the lender's terms.

The Labour Cabinet agreed to the assurances being given, and the loans were secured.

But loans are temporary measures only. The Cabinet had had a shock in realising how near we had been to the edge of a financial, and subsequently a national, collapse. As Mr. Henderson said, in the same speech quoted above, "The Prime Minister has brought the most convincing proof that we never denied it nor refused to consider it (the crisis)."

And again, "There was absolute agreement that we ought to do everything necessary in our power to balance the Budget."

It was to the balancing of the Budget that the Cabinet had now to give its most serious and urgent attention. The estimated deficit for the following year of over seventy million pounds had, in some way, to be wiped out. The Cabinet was agreed that rigid economies were absolutely necessary. This principle having been accepted by all, it became a matter of how the economies were to be effected.

Memories are short where politics are concerned, and many of us may have forgotten how the members of that Labour Cabinet were the first to bind themselves, in the interests of the country, to drastic economies. They were at the head of the nation and had to act with a full sense of their responsibility. It was in conformity with the principle of economy, and with the need to balance the Budget always before them, that the Labour Cabinet first put into operation the system of "cuts."

Among the first cuts were those in the pay of the civil servants, including the pay of postmen. Cuts in the pay of teachers were to follow. Mr. Lees Smith, who had been the Labour Minister for Education, told the House of Commons on September 11th that the Labour Cabinet had agreed to a cut of 15 per cent. in the pay of teachers (a cut that was reduced to 10 per cent. by the National Government!). The Labour Cabinet also agreed to cuts up to 15 per cent. in the pay of soldiers, sailors, and policemen (these, too, were later reduced to 10 per cent. by the National Government). In addition, the Cabinet, reviewing a large field of national activities, suggested radical economies in the expenditure of

the Ministries of Agriculture and Education, in the Ministry of Health, and in activities in the social services. As far as unemployment was concerned, they said there was to be increased contribution for unemployment insurance; that the period of ordinary benefit should be reduced from fifty-two to twenty-six weeks, and that a Means Test should be introduced for those unemployed who were drawing transitional benefit.

On one only of these cuts, or economies, was there disagreement. It was suggested that, as economies were being made in so many different directions, and as unemployment insurance benefit had reached such a crippling figure, there should be a cut of 10 per cent. in unemployment insurance. In view of the lowering of the cost of living, this, it was pointed out, would not involve the hardship on the unemployed that seemed apparent. A section of the Cabinet disagreed on this cut, although it appears that a number of them agreed to the principle that a cut of some kind must be made in unemployment insurance.

III

In effect, the Labour Cabinet determined that everything possible must be done to balance the budget, and the economies they suggested reached a large figure. "After sitting for several days," said Mr. Henderson, "we found this, that provisionally fifty-six million pounds of economies had been accepted."

The Cabinet also agreed that the situation was one of such national gravity that the other parties should be invited to co-operate in dealing with it.

What, then, were the dissentient members of the Labour Cabinet saying ? They were saying to Mr. MacDonald : " We agree that there is a national crisis, we agree that there must be rigid economies, we accept the principle of cuts, we admit that there must be national co-operation between different parties, but, if you expect us to be consistent and to apply the principle of economy everywhere, then we will refuse to follow you, and we wash our hands of the responsibility of introducing unpopular measures."

In other words, the Labour Cabinet having given guarantees and committed itself to general economy, feared the result of their own actions, and were unable to rise to the responsibility of their own commitments. They feared criticism, particularly, it is thought, from Trade Unionists, and having gone three-quarters of the way and started the economies, they got what we can only call " cold feet," put expediency in the place of duty, and having agreed with Mr. MacDonald that the country must have a national policy to meet a national crisis, reverted to a purely party programme, and deserted him when his need for their co-operation was greatest.

The Prime Minister, Mr. MacDonald, was then left with two alternatives. Should he, in this time of crisis, continue, as formerly agreed by the Labour Cabinet, on a national basis to fight the financial dangers that threatened the country ? Or should he, like other members of his Cabinet, throw in his hand, disown responsibility, and break up possible united political action ?

We know what course he took. He remained where he was, supported by Lord Sankey, Mr. (now Viscount)

Snowden, and Mr. J. H. Thomas. The rest of the Labour Cabinet resigned, hesitatingly in a number of cases, because they were doubtful of the wisdom of their own actions. Many of us recollect that this hesitancy lasted until the Trade Unions acclaimed them as heroes ; then they felt safe. From the point of view of duty, Mr. MacDonald's path was clear. He must go on, sparing no effort and no pains to pull the country through.

The crisis demanded national co-operation. That the leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Parties, particularly Mr. Baldwin, who had himself been Prime Minister, and whose political integrity and personal qualities inspire respect and affection among political friends and opponents alike, should have been ready and willing to serve in a National Government under the Premiership of Mr. MacDonald, is the greatest testimony to the need of a national front.

The three parties were represented in Mr. MacDonald's new Cabinet. That the Government was not as broadly National as some could have wished was entirely due to the lack of support it received from the Labour Party. As a body, they refused to co-operate with the Prime Minister, and only a handful of individual members were brave enough to secede from the whole and come to his support. In view of these facts, the argument of the Labour Party that the Government was not a fully National one was of their contrivance. It has been, and still remains, in the hands of Labour to alter the Ministry to a broader national basis by their co-operation. From the personal point of view, Mr. MacDonald took over the reins of National Government with a heavy heart, despite the overwhelming endorsement that he received from the

nation in the General Election that followed. For him it meant parting from a movement to which he had given almost his whole life, a movement which should owe to him the deepest debt of gratitude, for he nursed it from the days of its infancy, from small beginnings in a back room, when it had no money and no help beyond that of voluntary workers, to a great and respected political party. Thanks to Mr. MacDonald, more than to any other one person, the Labour Party had reached this position in the matter of a generation. His friends know that his attitude is still essentially the same. When he was an unknown youth, speaking at Southampton in 1895, he said, "At this moment, when so much is uncertain, there could be raised no cry more fatal to our well-being, general progress, and good government, than that which you hear in Southampton—party, party. Against that cry of my opponents I am to raise the answer—principle, principle. I am bound to neither Toryism nor Liberalism."

How the echo of 1895 reverberates in 1935! This extract might be part of a speech by Mr. MacDonald at the present day.

Mr. MacDonald's action in 1931 did not mean only that the Labour Party seceded from him. It meant the loss of his greatest personal friends who, in almost all cases, had worked in the Labour Party at his side. For the first time in his career, he felt terribly alone; the ostracism that he had endured for his political principles during the War was nothing to this personal loneliness. But in 1931 he was, as in 1895, bound to the nation's well-being.

Principle came before party, even if it meant the end of his career. There were many people in the autumn of 1931 who

thought that a National Government could last only a few months, and that after it there would be no place for Mr. MacDonald. That possibility was one that Mr. MacDonald realised well. In speaking to those of his assistants who had told him of their determination to remain with him, Mr. MacDonald placed the whole position before them, and warned them that, perhaps in the matter of a few months, or even of a few weeks, they might find themselves without positions if they supported him.

Before concluding this chapter, it might be pertinent to add that although the Labour Party became the spokesmen, and very heated spokesmen, against the National Government's "cuts" (in spite of the fact that so many of these cuts had been initiated by the Labour Cabinet), the Labour Party itself put a system of cuts into force in its own office and, on the same grounds of economy, went very carefully into the question of cutting down staff. Could there be any more convincing argument that this economy in all aspects of national expenditure was absolutely imperative?

CHAPTER II

SETTING THE NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD IN ORDER

THE National Government took office in the autumn of 1931, backed by an immense majority in the House, and the feeling that it represented the will of the people. But the financial crisis that had called it into being had still to be faced. Women will agree that the most urgent matter was to save the country from national disaster. Just as a family threatened with bankruptcy must attend first to its financial affairs, so social reforms, however important and desirable they might be, had to wait, for unless the finances of the country were set in order there might be little left to be reformed.

I will not weary readers with a long list of what was done by the National Government to restore the finances of the nation. We all remember that it meant sacrifices on the part of the majority, if not of the whole, of the community. There was some grumbling, and a great deal of criticism, but when we look back on what has been achieved, few people would deny the Government's success. The Government saved the country, and with the country our homes, from the disaster that must have followed a financial collapse. It restored our national credit. It was able to produce a balanced Budget in the autumn of 1931, to the amazement of the country and of the whole world, and showed substantial surpluses in the Budgets in 1934 and 1935.

This has been due to a gradual working out of a policy of reorganisation and retrenchment, covering a period of three and a half years since the autumn of 1931; a sound and steady achievement, not a sudden flash in the pan. The deficit, in the last Labour Budget in the spring of 1931, was over twenty-three million pounds. This was altered by the National Government into a surplus in 1931-32, of three hundred and sixty-four thousand pounds.

In 1933-34, the surplus was over thirty-one million pounds, with the result that the Government in 1934 found itself in a position to relax its rigid economies, to restore the benefit cuts in Unemployment Insurance in full, to restore the other economy cuts by half, and to reduce income-tax by sixpence in the pound. This triumph was achieved at a time when other nations were finding themselves unable even to balance their budgets, far less to have a surplus. That Great Britain could produce such a surplus made her the envy of the rest of the world, and re-established her as the country of sound finance.

"Heureux Pays !" (Happy Country !), commented the *Paris Figaro*. The *Journal des Debats* described the Budget as "a Budget to be envied."

The *Herald Tribune*, of New York, discoursed at greater length: "Mr. Chamberlain's Budget message is easily the most satisfactory and hopeful since 1931. . . . It has succeeded in putting British finances in order and recapturing the confidence of the world. Not only is British financial prestige higher than it has been in many years, but Great Britain has made much genuine progress along the road to economic recovery."

The *New York American* was even more enthusiastic. "Well may Britain rejoice," it wrote, "for it cannot be gainsaid that she had made striking progress along lines of sanity, sobriety, and sound economic and financial principles. She has kept her head when all about her have been losing theirs."

These were a few of the enthusiastic comments on the Budget of 1934. The Budget of 1935 met with as warm, if not a warmer, reception. Not only was there a surplus in this Budget of eleven millions twenty-five thousand pounds, but the remaining half of the cuts in the pay of teachers, postmen, civil servants, and others in the employment of the Government were restored, while further substantial concessions were granted in the matter of income-tax to lower-salaried workers. By these concessions the great majority of taxpayers in the country get a reduction of ninepence in the pound, and the greatest relief will come to the small taxpayers, particularly those with families.

In addition, the Entertainments Tax is being removed in the case of seats costing less than sixpence, and in certain other instances the tax is being reduced. This has been acclaimed with much enthusiasm by the working classes, and the Budget is being welcomed with justification as "The Working-Man's Budget."

Mr. Chamberlain's summary of the year's financial record showed the nation what sound steady progress is being made in our industry and commerce. Our industrial output has increased throughout the year by about 12 per cent. and our exports by thirty million pounds.

"Last year," said the Chancellor of the Exchequer, "the people of this country sweetened their lives with eighty

thousand tons of sugar more than in the previous year. They smoked six and a half million pounds more tobacco, equivalent, I am told, to the consumption of two million six hundred thousand cigarettes. They spent two and three-quarter million pounds more on entertainments, and they washed away their troubles with two hundred and seventy million more pints of beer and with seven hundred million more cups of that beverage which cheers but not inebriates."

In almost every branch of industrial life, he told us, there were signs of healthy vigour and definite progress, and deposits in Savings' Banks and the purchase of Savings' Certificates had increased by almost fifty million pounds. Looking back on the crisis of August 1931 we can indeed feel now that we have weathered the storm, and we have every cause for thinking that prosperity is once again returning.

CHAPTER III

MORE PEOPLE AT WORK

“WE have a million more in work than when we started,” said Mr. Baldwin in June 1935, when reviewing the record of the Government since 1931. This increase in employment is one of the most remarkable of the National Government’s achievements, at a time when circumstances at home and abroad were at their worst.

The majority of women will agree with me that for a middle-class or working-class wife there are few harder things to face than the news that the husband, father, and breadwinner of the family has lost his job. Existence seems to stand still, and then the world—your particular world—seems to fall to pieces. The safety and security which you had never questioned melt away, and you find yourself face to face with the realities of living, at their grimmest.

It might almost be true to say that it is on the women of the household that the tragedy of unemployment, when it comes, falls most heavily. They have to “make do,” and most of us, whether or not we have been unfortunate enough to have had the experience, will realise what that expression means. The wife and mother, with the little money available, has to provide whatever food, warmth, and clothing is possible. Mothers are the same all the world over, and will stint themselves of even the little they might have, in order to provide more for their families. The tragedy of unemploy-

ment has become a common tale now in every corner of the globe, in the wealthiest as well as in the poorest of countries. Unemployment, with its attendant miseries, has, since the Great War, been the greatest catastrophe that has befallen the world.

When we remember this, and see that practically no other commercial and industrial country faced with such a problem has been able to grapple with it to the extent that we have done in this country, English men and English women may well feel grateful, and proud of the National Government. There is still much to do, for, as Mr. Baldwin said in the same speech, "Unemployment is the worst enemy we have to fight and the most difficult," but real progress and definite progress is being made.

Unemployment is, as we said, a common tale. It is also, alas ! an old tale. Before the National Government came into office, Government after Government had struggled with the problem.

The Labour Party which took office in 1929 won the General Election of that year on the great issue of unemployment. They had the matter very closely at heart. For them it was essentially a Labour question. It was particularly to the women in the working-class areas that Labour candidates appealed, and it was largely these women who in 1929 helped to return them to Parliament—to settle the unemployment question once and for all.

They came in pledged to solve the problem, but the problem was too big for them. When Labour took office in June 1929, the unemployed in the country had numbered just over one million. During the two years that followed, un-

employment actually more than doubled its figures, and by August 1931 the number of unemployed workers in the country amounted to 2,733,782. Nothing seemed able to check the increase, and the Labour leaders were aghast at the prospect of the figure reaching three millions. Women in families where there has been unemployment know too well the unhappiness that lies behind such figures. Other women, more fortunately placed, need little imagination to understand it.

During 1930 and the first half of 1931 unemployment spread like a disease. Weekly and daily, the newspapers told of bankruptcies, of firms closing down, of trusted men with ten, twenty, forty years' honourable service to their credit finding themselves suddenly thrown from the security of a fine position to join the ranks of the workless. Artisan and "black-coated" worker suffered alike. A deep gloom settled on the country and no man or woman felt safe. The next week, the next month, might involve each one in the same catastrophe.

This colossal increase in the figures of the unemployed showed the country that the problem had become far too big for any *one* party to tackle without national co-operation. This factor proved one of the chief causes for the return of the National Government in 1931. More women are said to have voted in the election of 1931 than had ever voted before. These votes for the National Government were the expression of a hope that a Government, on a broad national basis, freed from the hamperings of party politics, would really be able to face this huge question.

The National Government has justified that hope beyond

expectation. The alarming increase in unemployment was stopped. In August 1931 there were nine million three hundred and ninety-nine thousand people at work in the country from amongst the insured workers. In September 1934 there were ten million two hundred and thirty-three thousand; and it has been estimated that, except for part of 1929, there are more people at work in the country to-day than at any time in the past ten years. This, indeed, is no mean achievement, particularly when we remember the world conditions that have produced such figures for unemployment in other countries. In the United States of America the number of unemployed are estimated at over ten million three hundred and twelve thousand, a number actually greater than the number of *workers* in this country ! Germany claims to have reduced her figures of four and a half million unemployed, but her methods of robbing Peter to pay Paul, of persecution and internment in concentration camps, of confiscating property, depriving people of positions, and making numbers of them flee the country, are not methods to appeal to us in this country as suitable for lessening unemployment. Germany's provisional figures, in spite of these methods, stand at over two million unemployed.

More men at work has meant more trade, or rather it would be more correct to say more trade has meant more employment. Many different trades have reacted to the general improvement, although there are others where the improvement is still awaited.

In the Iron and Steel Industry there has been an all-round improvement. This is of particular interest to women living in the North and in the Midlands, who know too well the

grim side of the picture when factories and mills are closed and furnaces are silent.

Trade has made great strides in the Woollen Industry, and there has been improvement in the Cotton Industry, although this industry, owing to a series of economic factors, such as the extensive use of artificial silk in the place of cotton, is in a category of its own, and will need its own particular treatment before radical improvement can set in.

Unemployment has decreased in the mines. Even such industries as the Linen and Carpet trades have known improved conditions.

One of the most remarkable improvements has been in the Motor-car Industry. Exports have increased, unemployment has decreased, and more and more cars are being purchased every year by people in this country. This has a special significance beyond its importance for employment. The production of motor-cars is, after all, a luxury trade, and the great increase in its output reflects more than almost any other industry the general improvement of conditions in the country as a whole, the greater purchasing power, and the general raising of the standard of living.

For the first time since unemployment became such a grave problem, its ravages have been checked and its figures substantially reduced.

With the healthy progress of trade, and the impetus to building that will follow the Government's Housing and Slum Clearance Schemes, it is anticipated that still greater improvement will be made.

Women like myself who look round and see the general improvement in industry in the country, and the general

improvement in the spirit of the people, must feel, whatever our political views may be, that hundreds of thousands of homes are better off than they were two or three years ago, and hundreds of thousands of people are happier. The problem of unemployment is unfortunately still with us, but the progress made is one of real encouragement.

CHAPTER IV

MORE BUYING AND SELLING

I DO not know whether women have longer memories than men, but when I look around and see on almost every hand signs of a new energy, a new spirit, and a new confidence, my mind instinctively goes back to what seemed a desperate condition of national ill-health a few years ago. Compared with that period the present seems a state of healthy convalescence, with strides being taken daily in the progress of sound national health.

After the years of "slump" and depression, we now see on all sides evidence of improving and increasing trade. One of the best tests of the nation's output is a study of its relative exports and imports. But figures are burdensome, and I will merely point out what we can notice every day.

We are not a spend-thrift nation. When we have not the money to spend we do not spend. If there is more trade and more spending, it is conclusive proof that people have more money.

There is a remarkable increase in spending at the present day, and, incidentally, an increase in working-class savings. Take London, for example. If a woman goes out shopping in one of the main shopping centres any day of the week between ten in the morning and six in the afternoon, she will find the streets and shops full of other women (with a sprinkling of men) all busy shopping. You will find that this is

the case in almost every kind of shopping-centre, but those I am thinking of now are what I call the comprehensive shopping-centres of Knightsbridge, Kensington, and Oxford Street, where the big stores are thronged with customers. To me, a Londoner, the comparison between the numbers of shoppers nowadays with those of two or three years ago shows an amazing difference.

It is invidious, and very old-fashioned now, I know, to talk of different classes, but I feel I am justified in saying that women of *every* class make up this throng of shoppers. In some of the stores there is certainly a definite catering for the requirements of poorer people. These are shopping extensively, for themselves and for their families; clothes for husband and children, furniture, curtains and other furnishings, hardware, stoves, gadgets for the house, for the garden, and so forth. On every hand, women are spending more, spending not only because they have more money to spend, but because they have more confidence in the present and in the future. Women who have to budget for the whole family do not spend freely and easily when they feel that a catastrophe may come next week and shatter their homes. With fear of upheaval, or of the wage-earner losing his job, they keep what little they have instead of spending it, even on essentials, and still less on luxuries such as radio sets, new furniture, or even, in certain cases, on a car.

I have written already about the great expansion in the car industry, and shown how significant it is as an index of improved prosperity. Perhaps the growing use of the wireless is of still greater significance. Of course there are some families clever enough to make their own sets. But there are

hundreds of thousands of families who now possess wireless sets that have been purchased. To go into any town working-class home and find it without a wireless set is almost as rare as finding it without electric light. This is indeed a sign of better conditions. It means that the luxuries of life are not only coming within the reach of more people, but that homes are being planned on broader and more satisfying lines. People are getting more into their lives, have ampler means of obtaining what they want, and a feeling of security that makes it worth while to add to the home's amenities.

This feeling of security is so essential to home-planning and to real home-life, that we need not be surprised that the security we now enjoy is the envy and admiration of those foreigners whose own countries are in a less happy position.

This increased spending, implying as it does fuller purses to spend from, brings to mind the formerly highly contentious question of "the cuts." When "the cuts" were put into operation in autumn 1931 the Government stated that they were being made in the interests of economy, that an all-round scaling-down was to be enforced in all directions in the hope that rigid retrenchment might bridge us over the critical financial period described in Chapter I. There were many people then who admitted that a crisis had to be averted, but who were cynical about the effect of "the cuts," and far more cynical about "the cuts" ever being restored. I have shown already that every section of the community, including the Labour Party Secretariat, found it necessary to follow the Government's example in the matter of economy. Now, in 1935, people of every political opinion can see that the Government acted in good faith. They have brought the

country through the bad times, and have secured our credit abroad and our finances at home. The cuts in the pay of teachers, postmen, civil servants, and others in the pay of the Government have been restored (half in 1934, and the other half in 1935). The cut made in the Unemployment Insurance benefit was restored in full in the 1934 Budget. It will be recollected that it was on the question of the cut in Unemployment Insurance that the split in the Labour Cabinet took place in 1931.

The restoration of the cuts is one of the healthiest signs that the country has turned the corner. The head of the household, as it were, having by rigid retrenchments and three years' careful management put himself and his family on their feet again, is now able to relax severe economy and the family can spend more freely. Money released for spending in its turn stimulates and encourages trade and increases the spirit of optimism and confidence. A friend of mine, a school-teacher, said to me two years ago in her downright way, "They [being the invisible enemy, the Government] have taken forty pounds from me this year. Well, that will only mean that I'll spend so much less on dress and extras." Now that she is feeling the benefit of the restored cuts and the improvement in income-tax she is arranging her purchases accordingly.

CHAPTER V

NEW HOMES FOR OLD

NEW homes for old ! A cry that has appealed to the women of a country from time immemorial, for women are the home-makers everywhere. Home and health are still the nucleus of the average woman's life. The safety of the family ranks first with the housewife, and after that comes the health and the comfort of its various members.

Health and comfort, as every woman knows, come with the right house—large enough, and yet not too large, convenient, and yet not “fussy”—a house that can be made into a home.

Looking at it as an average woman, it seems that the National Government is sparing no effort to give us better, more adequate, and more suitable houses than any other Government has been able to provide.

The end of the War found us faced with a housing problem. While the War was in progress, people had stopped building new houses. For various reasons, some due to economy, some to the feeling that there was safety in numbers, that the future seemed uncertain, and the risk great, married members of families had in a very large number of cases joined forces and shared houses with their relations. This was, naturally, particularly the case with “war marriages,” for soldiers marrying during the War had neither the opportunity nor the inclination to set up individual homes,

and liked to feel that their wives were living in the safety of their parents' homes while they were away fighting. After the War, with the demobilisation of the troops and the setting up of new households, it became glaringly apparent that there was a great scarcity of houses. Indeed, there were only eight million houses in all England and Wales !

Since 1918 it has been the policy of all Governments to make good this scarcity, and Housing Acts have been passed in quick succession to deal with the problem. One of the chief aims that has been borne in mind throughout has been that the new houses built should be at rentals sufficiently low for the wage-earning classes.

Until 1934 the record building year was 1927, when over two hundred and seventy-three thousand new houses were built.

But 1934 was a real "bumper" year in the building trade, and more than three hundred thousand new houses were built. If building progress goes on at the same rate, every woman in the country should soon be able to have suitable and decent accommodation for her family.

House building has another aspect which also touches women very closely. It reduces unemployment in the building trade. When we remember how many different trades unite in the building industry—timber, bricks and tiles, gas, electricity, plumbing, decorating, painting, and a number of other subsidiary industries, it is easy to see how each house, that makes one family comfortable, may spread its benefits among a host of others.

But perhaps one of the bravest steps that the National Government has taken in the building line has been in the matter of Slum Clearance.

CHAPTER VI

GOOD-BYE TO THE SLUMS

I

TWO hundred thousand slum dwellers were rehoused over a period of sixty years ! Now we are rehousing from slum dwellings at the rate of one hundred and fifty thousand a year, and hope, by the end of this year, to be doing this at the rate of two hundred and fifty thousand a year ! What a fine achievement for the National Government, and what an encouraging thought for British men and women !

“ Slum Clearance ” has for years been on the programme of all parties, and yet the slums have remained doggedly with us. Their existence has been one of the greatest blots on the nation’s good name. It has been a disgrace that one of the foremost countries in the world should still tolerate its slums. “ What has been done by past Governments ? ” we ask. And the reply is, “ Very little,” although of good intentions and pious hopes there have been plenty.

Now, at last, a real onslaught is being made on these plague spots, and if the Government’s Overcrowding Bill succeeds—and everybody with the nation’s welfare at heart wishes it every success—the National Government will go down to posterity as the Government that cleared the slums and gave the working classes their houses.

The Labour Government that preceded the National

Government had started the scheme of clearing the slums. No one knows better than the members of that Cabinet the difficulties with which such a scheme must bristle, but no one knows better the fundamental importance of such a scheme for the future of the working classes. Labour men and women must, therefore, be grateful to the National Government, not only for continuing the Slum Clearance Scheme, but for enlarging it so extensively.

The programmes of the Slum Clearance Scheme of 1930 (resulting from the Housing Act of that year) provided for the clearance of over seventy-six thousand slum houses. The present Government's "Five-Year Plan," which is now under way, provides for the clearing of two hundred and eighty-six thousand slum or unfit houses, and for the rehousing of one and a quarter million people, within the period of five years ! Some schemes have still to be considered, and it is expected that the figure of houses to be cleared will rise to about three hundred thousand. If that scheme can be carried through successfully, it will be one of the most remarkable achievements any Government of any party has yet produced. If, as women of all political parties must earnestly hope, the scheme comes to happy fruition, New Homes for Slum Homes will indeed be a fitting national memorial to the National Government.

Like other women, I have chafed at what seemed the slowness of the Government's slum-clearance scheme. But on consideration I realised that such a scheme must of necessity be slow at its beginning, that programmes take time to be drawn up, to be examined, and approved, and that progress can only become noticeable when the work is well

under way. Now we are really in a position to see the results of the Five-Year Plan, and very gratifying results they are.

It will be remembered that it was as recently as April 1933 that the Minister of Health, in a circular to nearly two thousand housing authorities in England and Wales, declared that slum clearance was proceeding far too slowly, and that a great effort was required in the future to expedite the work. The Government was prepared to help and co-operate with local authorities in order to get the slums cleared within a specified time. The local authorities were asked to submit, by September 1933, details as to the slum regions in their own districts that wanted clearing, and the methods in which they proposed to provide alternative accommodation for those whose slum houses were to be destroyed. These schemes were to be drawn up with a view to starting work immediately and having the work finished within five years, that is, by 1938. Nobody going through the country during the six months between April and September 1933 could have failed to be impressed by the public appeals on hoardings and in other noticeable positions on behalf of the Slum Clearance Campaign, awakening the public conscience on the question, and winning over any opponents of the scheme.

The whole idea of slum clearance is one that makes a particular appeal to women.

On grounds of public health and hygiene alone they need no convincing of the difference between rearing families in slums and rearing them in decent houses, with good sanitary arrangements, where overcrowding does not exist, where the air is purer, and the streets clean and wide. There are over

a million slum-dwellers in the country, many of whom are C₃ in physique as a direct result of the appalling conditions under which they live. The Government's scheme will bring untold improvement to hundreds of thousands of persons in the matter of health alone. This, apart from other considerations, should be ample return for one of the most far-reaching social reforms that the country has yet known. Progress has been speeded up in all directions lately and the slowness of the early stages has now been overcome. No one, least of all the Government, expected spectacular results during the first year, but in spite of this the results already at hand are most encouraging.

The number of houses being built under the scheme was seven thousand six hundred and twenty-seven in December 1933. Steady progress brought this figure up to nineteen thousand nine hundred and one by October 1934. The number of houses being built each month had increased, from eight hundred and forty-eight in January, to two thousand two hundred and five in October, and the monthly returns since then continue to show an equally cheering increase. If progress is maintained at a similar rate, or even at the steady level it has now reached, the scheme stands an excellent chance of being completed within the stipulated five years, which, as all thinking women must agree, is in itself a very short period for such an extensive scheme.

From the time when the campaign was started up to the end of September 1934, clearance schemes had been put into operation involving over sixty thousand slum houses and about a quarter of a million people. The Ministry of Health had estimated that in order to complete the scheme within the

specified period about forty thousand houses would have had to be dealt with by the end of September 1934. The actual number of houses dealt with has exceeded this estimate, so that we seem well on the way to a successful issue.

II

House breaking means house building. Hand-in-hand with the Slum Clearance Scheme is the attack on overcrowding.

Two million five hundred thousand houses have been built since the War, but overcrowding still persists. Women do not need reminding of this horror, of conditions in which ten or more people live in two rooms, and the grave results to health and morals that such conditions entail. That slum-dwellers are as healthy, mentally and physically, as they are, speaks highly for their character and pluck. From the point of view of health and decency the problem is one that must be faced with as little delay as possible. But the problem is not an easy one to tackle. In many cases the landlords, who let their houses or their floors to as many people as they can find to take them, in order to squeeze as much profit as possible out of the house, are directly the people to blame. The Government is now making a determined attack on the evils by their Overcrowding Bill, introduced in the Spring Session, 1935. Their onslaught starts at the very beginning. They have laid down in the Bill a minimum standard for accommodation, a standard that is not a very high one, but one that, by its reasonableness, is likely to be achieved. This will assure a so-called "decent" degree of accommodation

for everyone. In the new schemes for slum clearance this standard of accommodation is being adhered to, so that there shall be no overcrowding from the time that the new houses or flats are first occupied.

Those who are not familiar with details of the Bill will be interested in hearing something of its scope. Local authorities are empowered to clear whole areas, which are, or which include, slum property, in order to put up new houses or new flats. The Government is prepared to pay generous subsidies towards the expense of erecting these. In these new houses and flats the number of rooms per person are being, and will be, allotted according to the Government standard, and no landlord will be able to let a flat or house, to a family or families, unless this standard is conformed with, nor will families be allowed to rent anything below the recognised minimum number of rooms, or of floor space. The Government's financial help is to be particularly directed to cases and districts where the work could not otherwise be carried out. This applies especially to the erection in towns of flats that are expensive to construct, and to the provision of country cottages for agricultural labourers where the level of agricultural wages is low.

The Bill is one of the most comprehensive and ambitious that Parliament has ever had before it. It settles certain thorny points in Slum Clearance that have hitherto been serious obstacles, as, for example, the question of giving compensation to Slum Property Owners. A distinction is to be made between those slum landlords who have done their best to improve their property and those who have done nothing. Provision is made under the Bill for the pooling

of the various subsidies under the existing Housing Acts from 1919 onwards.

But the main part of the Bill aims first at providing an ample supply of houses within the means of the low wage-earners, and secondly at seeing that once overcrowding is prevented it shall not recur.

The occupier of the house will be chiefly responsible for seeing that the house is not overcrowded, but the landlord will also be held liable if it can be shown that he was aware of overcrowding and took no steps to remedy it.

The question of rents is naturally close to the hearts of working men and women. These must of necessity vary according to locality, and will largely depend upon local authorities, but the Government hopes, by means of this scheme, that the average rentals will be within the region of six shillings to eight shillings a week for houses, and from nine shillings to twelve shillings a week for flats, rates to be included. Hundreds of thousands of women throughout the country will welcome the proposed changes with open arms. To have a new house or a new flat for such a modest sum, hygienically fitted up and equipped with modern devices, in clean, healthy surroundings, instead of the grimy, poky little places which hours of daily scrubbing could not keep clean and fresh, will be almost like opening the Elysian fields to numbers of mothers from the slums.

It is obvious that we are here making one of the most determined attacks on a social evil that has ever been made. The saving to public health will be incalculable. In towns such as Leeds and Birmingham the difference in child mortality between the slum houses and the Corporation

houses is remarkable, and in Birmingham the fall in the death-rate, when people were moved from the slums to new houses, was more remarkable still.

There is another aspect of this campaign. It is estimated that the slum clearance schemes spread over five years will give direct employment to fifty thousand men in the building trade, and indirect employment to an additional thirty thousand men in subsidiary trades. That in itself is a cheering prospect to the country, and especially to the wives and families of the men concerned.

This is, taking it all in all, one of the finest pieces of work the National Government is undertaking. The Minister of Health, when addressing the Housing Conference of the Association of Municipal Corporations, said :

“ The slum clearance campaign is the biggest and the most direct effort which has ever been made to improve the homes of the people. If it goes on as it has begun, and it is our business to see that it does, we shall make certain that no man, woman or child in the country is living in a house that is not fit for human beings to live in.”

This, as all housewives will agree, is an aim worthy of such a great country as ours, and in saying “ Good-bye to the Slums ” we can confidently look forward to the development of a finer and healthier existence for the working classes.

CHAPTER VII

OUR CHILDREN

I

WHAT has the National Government done for our children? That to every woman must be a fundamentally important question. And not to women only, for it is on the health and general welfare of the next generation that the nation's future rests.

It is perfectly obvious that the best-laid education scheme in the world is going to fail if the children to be educated are hungry. Mind and body must grow in unison, and that Government is a wise Government that supplements the good stuff that goes into the children's heads in school hours, with good stuff of a different sort going in lower down.

The present Board of Education is doing more in this respect for school-children as a whole, and for poor and necessitous children in particular, than any Board has done before.

In November 1931, three hundred and sixteen Local Education Authorities had the power to provide meals for school-children, but only one hundred and thirty-eight were exercising that power. Largely as a result of the Board of Education's persuasion and help, this number was increased by December 1934 to two hundred and five. This in itself is a good advance. There still remain one hundred and eleven Education Authorities who are doing nothing in the

matter of the provision of meals. Many of these operate in prosperous seaside towns or in small country towns, where, they maintain, free meals are not necessary. The Board of Education is going into the question with these authorities, and in certain areas, where the local Education Authority has done nothing, and where the Board of Education feels that free meals and milk are necessary, the Board itself is taking steps to see that no necessitous children are neglected.

The Government's Milk Scheme enables children to buy one-third of a pint of milk in a bottle, together with a straw, for a halfpenny—half the price that had formerly to be paid. This scheme came into operation on October 1st, 1934, as a result of an arrangement between the Government and the Milk Marketing Board, substantial financial assistance having been given by the Exchequer. Before October 1934 it was estimated that about one million children were receiving milk in school. Three months later, thanks to the new scheme, about two and a half million were receiving milk in school. Before very long every school-child in England may get its daily milk as naturally as it gets its reading lesson. It is a scheme that has been hailed with acclamation by parents, Education Authorities, and teachers alike. Milk is good for every growing child, if he or she be well or underfed. Every precaution, of course, is taken to see that the milk is clean.

Where the parents of children cannot afford to pay a halfpenny a bottle, the milk is distributed free by the local Education Authority. Only teachers in the poorer schools know how heart-rending it is, and usually how useless, to teach children who are physically unfit. The good effect of

this provision of cheap milk, and the more extensive provision of free meals, cannot be put too high.

The Board of Education has launched an active campaign to discover if any under-nourished school-children are being overlooked in these schemes. With the help of school-teachers and School Medical Officers, existing arrangements made by the local Education Authorities are being examined, with the aim of ensuring that the benefits of free meals and milk are given to *all* poor and under-nourished children. The Board emphasises that "any symptoms of subnormal nutrition, however slight, be regarded as entitling a child to free meals or milk, where the parent is considered to be unable to bear the cost." To make sure that any new cases of "subnormal nutrition" receive attention, the Board of Education strongly urges that all school-children should be examined at frequent intervals by the School Medical Officer, and that the teacher's opinion and recommendation, which, based as it is on a day-to-day study of the children, is bound to be valuable, should be taken into account.

That interesting document, the Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health, points out that all reports are made independently by School Medical Officers of their particular districts. The officers inspect school-children in three different age groups of five, eight, and twelve years respectively. In 1933, three million children had medical examination, and two million of these were later re-examined. The examination is thorough and comprehensive, including height, weight, general condition of the body, the skin, muscles, hair, etc., and is carried out by an efficient band of thirteen hundred and forty-one school

doctors, (three hundred and sixty of them are women), and five thousand six hundred and thirty nurses. Particulars are taken to find out to what extent children are suffering from under-nourishment and malnutrition, as a consequence of severe economic distress following continuous unemployment.

The Minister of Health for the County of London says in the Report: "There was considerable apprehension lest the health and physique of the children should suffer (in cases where the parents had been unemployed for long periods). Special steps were taken to ascertain the facts and to endeavour to ameliorate, so far as powers are given under the Education Acts, the lot of those subjected to adverse economic conditions. . . . The number reported to be below average nutrition was 4·7 per cent., the lowest ever recorded in London. While in dealing," he adds, "with such a serious matter as the nutritional condition of the London school-child, there is no place for unbalanced optimism, yet it is fair to say that, on the best evidence available, the great increase in the number of ill-nourished children which might reasonably have been expected has not occurred, and the school 'social services' have apparently been able to cope successfully with one of the most trying episodes which they have yet had to face."

Statements of a similar character have come in from different parts of the country.

From the Medical Officer for Monmouthshire: "Although the County is hard pressed industrially, there has been no increase in malnutrition in the school-children."

From Nottinghamshire: "As a result of a systematic

enquiry, there is no evidence in this county of any definite deterioration in the 'nutrition' of the elementary school-children."

From Yorkshire: "No evidence of a lowered standard of nutrition during the economic stress of the past four years."

Birmingham, Bristol, and Liverpool give similar reassuring reports. Manchester writes: "Malnutrition and rickets to-day only exist among Manchester school-children to half the extent to which they did five years ago." In Newcastle-on-Tyne the Medical Officer reports: "It is a matter for profound satisfaction that our figures show an improvement upon those of 1932 and 1931. Again I must emphasise the value of the work done under the Provision of Meals Service over so many years. It is the child's sheet-anchor against malnutrition."

Sheffield's medical officer points to a decided improvement: "The figures (for height and weight of twenty-three thousand five hundred children four to fourteen years of age) in the present year show a 'marked advance' on those of five and thirteen years ago."

These reports were made for the year 1933. Good as they are, they ought not to give the impression that everything is perfect. There is still much to be done, but with the lessening of unemployment and with so many more school-children this year drinking cheap or free milk, we may look forward to even more satisfactory results in the next statement of the Ministry of Health.

Since the Government's Milk Scheme has come into operation, I have spoken to numerous school-teachers and education officers, and they have nothing but praise for it.

One teacher in a poor school told me that it would revolutionise her teaching, for the "human material" that made up her class had hitherto been so pathetically tired or so hungry that she had almost given up expecting to teach them anything at all. Now that practically every one of her pupils was receiving either free meals or milk, or was getting a bottle of milk for a halfpenny, there was a change in the whole tenor of the class.

Mr. Ramsbotham, M.P., the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, put the position very clearly in a recent speech. "If children are both poor and undernourished," he said, "the local Education Authorities have power to give them free milk, while all other children can receive milk in school every day at the very low reduced charge of halfpenny a day. I should like, therefore, to make it plain that under the existing law no child that needs milk need go without it. . . ." Later, he said: "We have no intention that children who seem to need food or milk should have to wait for a doctor's decision before they can receive a meal or a glass of milk."

II

There is another aspect of the Government's work for children that is particularly interesting to women. Two important Acts, passed by the National Government, profoundly affect the lives of children. One is the "Children and Young Persons Act" of 1932, and the other the "Shops Act" of 1934.

When the Children and Young Persons Act came into

force, a prominent Labour Party woman, Miss Ellen Wilkinson, pointed out how significant a step had been taken by passing such an Act. She said, however, that while praising the Act for what it did, she regretted that the Government had not taken the opportunity to include in it legislation for the employment of children under eighteen. For that reason, Miss Wilkinson implied, she could not join the chorus of those women and men who claimed that the Children and Young Persons Act was going to be the "Children's Charter."

There were many other women who were enthusiastic about the Act, but who agreed with Miss Wilkinson that there had been an important omission.

Now, that omission has been largely remedied by the passing of the Shops Act, which came into force in December 1934. Taken together, these two Acts provide what might now be truly claimed as a "Children's Charter."

The Children and Young Persons Act, now in its second year of operation, is already doing more than any one Act or series of Acts have yet done to tackle the problem of child delinquents, and of children in need of care and protection. The principle underlying the Act is that young delinquents should be treated with a view to reclaiming and reforming them, in the hope that they will become law-abiding citizens instead of developing into hardened criminals, who may spend years of their adult lives in and out of prisons.

With this end in view, the new Juvenile Courts set up under the Act are to be places of helpfulness rather than places of punishment. The old Children's Courts have disappeared, and these Juvenile Courts are now in full working

order. They deal with children (those under the age of fourteen) and young persons (from fourteen to seventeen years of age).

The new Act consolidates all the Acts that have hitherto been passed dealing with delinquent children and the old Children's Courts, and makes radical and far-reaching changes for the future.

The framers of the Act recognised that the problem "is not the right of society to be protected from the disorderly or anti-social child, but the right of the disorderly or anti-social person to be made orderly and useful."

Under the Act a special panel of magistrates has been set up, comprising men and women specially chosen for their knowledge of and interest in this sort of work for children. Three magistrates, one of whom is a woman, sit in the Juvenile Courts, which are held in specially selected places quite apart from police-courts. It is now freely admitted that many child delinquents get into trouble because of sheer mischief, lack of guidance, or peculiar psychological difficulties, and that the majority of cases will respond speedily to wise treatment. For this reason, and because of the tender age of the children, it is obviously far better that the Juvenile Courts should be entirely dissociated, in procedure as well as in place, from ordinary police-courts. Hence the entire absence of police uniform: the officers who attend for the cases are dressed in everyday plain clothes. Even the arrangement of the room is planned to make it as "un-police-like" as possible. The three magistrates sit at a long table, while at adjoining tables sit Probation Officers (men and women) and School Attendance Officers. The children

are accompanied by their parents or, failing these, by a relative or another responsible person. There is no "standing in the box": there is no "box." The children stand before the magistrate's table listening to evidence which they are permitted to question, consulting with their parents if there is anything they do not understand, and making their own statements, in very much the same way as if they were at school, being "called up" before the Headmaster.

The words "conviction" and "sentenced" are not used in connection with cases in Juvenile Courts. In order that the child shall understand everything that is taking place, and the full nature of the charge against him, all proceedings are carried out in the simplest language. At the beginning of the "case" he is given the choice of being tried by that Court or being tried by a jury. The child may make a statement, give evidence, and call witnesses. If he is found guilty, his parent, or guardian, may make a statement on his behalf, if he so desires. Full details as to home surroundings, school record, medical history, and any other pertinent information should be at hand for consideration, or the child is remanded while such enquiries are made. In fact, everything is done to help the child, and to get to a full understanding both of the child's actions and what might be called the "contributory causes" of environment and associations.

One of the most important sections of the Act deals with children and young persons in need of care and protection. This is the section that has been welcomed with most enthusiasm by social and welfare workers throughout the country for the fact that it raises the legal age of protection by a year. "Young Persons," legally speaking, were previously

considered to be those under the age of sixteen. Now the age is raised to seventeen, which brings within this section many young boys and young girls who stand in dire need of such protection.

It is impossible to mention all the numerous and varied sections under which children and young persons are now protected by the law. There are provisions for those who are not under proper guardianship, those who are exposed to moral or physical danger, those falling into bad associations, and those who are out of control. Parents or guardians can bring before the Juvenile Court a child or young person who is beyond home control. Children or young persons found wandering or begging come within the provision of this Act and under the protection of these courts, as do those who are victims of sexual offences.

As the Act contains a hundred and nine clauses and six very important schedules, it is impossible to do more than indicate its comprehensiveness. A quick glance at some of the headings in Part I will be sufficient to show how broad is its scope. It is headed: Prevention of Cruelty and Exposure to Moral and Physical Danger.

1. Cruelty to persons under sixteen.
2. Causing or encouraging seduction or prostitution of girls under sixteen.
3. Allowing persons under sixteen to be in brothels.
4. Causing or allowing persons under sixteen to be used for begging.
5. Giving intoxicating liquor to children under five.
6. Causing or allowing children to be in bars of licensed premises.

7. Sale of tobacco, etc., to persons under sixteen.
8. Taking pawns from persons under fourteen.
9. Purchase of old metals from persons under sixteen.
10. Vagrants preventing children from receiving education.
11. Exposing children under seven to risk of burning.
12. Failing to provide for safety of children at entertainments.

The Juvenile Courts, as everyone who has had any connection with them will know, are doing excellent work in the country, although they have only been in existence such a short time, and history will testify that the Children and Young Persons Act was one of the finest and wisest pieces of legislation that social reform has known.

There is no need to remind women of the importance of dealing with delinquent children while young, to check them in forming criminal associations, and to give care and protection where needed. It is obvious that it is from the ranks of these delinquent children and young persons that the older offenders are so frequently recruited. Every child set on the right way may mean one grown-up offender the less in the future. The Act leaves no room for misunderstanding as to its aim and object. "Every Court," it says, "in dealing with a child or young person who is brought before it, either as being in need of care or protection, or as an offender or otherwise, shall have regard to the welfare of the child or young person, and shall in a proper case take steps for removing him from undesirable surroundings, and for securing that proper provision is made for his education and training."

III

Conditions relating to the employment of children and young persons are dealt with in Part II of the Act which, to a large extent, consolidates previous Acts dealing with the employment of children and has important amendments. Restrictions are imposed on children taking part in entertainments for which a charge is made. The employment of persons under sixteen in any public performance which may endanger life or limb is definitely prohibited, and restrictions are placed on the training of children or young persons for performances of a dangerous character. There are also restrictions on sending persons under eighteen abroad to perform for profit.

The hours for the employment of children under fourteen (these apply to such matters as the delivery of newspapers and milk) are carefully restricted, and the age for the employment of young persons in street-trading has been raised from fourteen to sixteen—a much-needed reform.

The Shops Act, which came into operation quite recently, affects, it is estimated, four hundred thousand young persons, all those, in fact, who are employed in retail and wholesale shops and warehouses, up to the age of eighteen. By the Shops Act of 1912, the limit to which young persons could be employed had been set at the incredible figure of seventy-four hours per week ! That such a figure should have been considered possible only twenty years ago casts a revealing light on the appalling conditions of employment that were then tolerated. Under the new Shops Act, the maximum number of hours of employment is forty-eight

hours per week, a great step in the direction of social progress and enlightenment. During periods of seasonal or exceptional pressure, overtime is permitted up to a maximum of six weeks in a year.

For young persons engaged on night work (as in theatres, restaurants, etc.) the Act enforces an interval of eleven consecutive hours. No young person can be employed before 6 a.m., unless he is engaged on the delivery of newspapers, milk or bread, for which special regulations are set down.

If employment is in spells during the day, provision must be made for breaks, so that there should be "reasonable opportunities" for instruction and recreation.

The occupier of the shop where young persons are employed must keep records of the hours worked by these employees, the intervals allowed for rest and meals, and the hours of overtime.

The penalty for any deliberate deception on the part of such a shop-owner, or employer, is heavy, being imprisonment for not more than three months, or a fine up to £20, or both !

An employee who works upwards of twenty-five hours per week shall be given a weekly half-holiday in addition to the recognised intervals for meals.

The Health and Comfort of Shop Workers comprises an important section of the Act, and one which all parents will gratefully welcome.

It enjoins that shops and warehouses shall have ample and suitable means of ventilation, sanitary arrangements, and reasonable temperature ; that every part of the shop shall be, and shall be kept, well lighted, that washing facilities must

be available, and that, if young persons take their meals on the premises, facilities must be granted them for such purposes. An additional clause, which will gain the particular thanks of women, ensures that female shop-assistants shall have the use of available seats in the shop "whenever the use thereof does not interfere with their work." This, it is to be hoped, will do much to lessen the fatigue of young girls who have to spend so many hours standing during the day.

To women, those who look from the point of view of the employment of their own children, and those who feel the interest and sympathy that every woman has in children and young persons, these two Acts, the Children and Young Persons Act and the Shops Act, are bound to make an appeal. Gaps there may be in the workings of the Acts, for however comprehensive is the scope of legislation, it is well-nigh impossible to envisage every different category and case. But taking the Acts together, they fully justify the acclamation they have received from social reformers, as providing a benevolent Charter for the protection and safeguarding of the interests of the young.

CHAPTER VIII

SECURITY OR REVOLUTION ?

I

DURING the last few years, a tide of revolution has been sweeping through the world. Country after country has been affected by it, some in one way, some in another. Revolutions, civil wars, dictatorships, have changed the face of Europe. Some say that the economic and social distresses in the various countries have been the cause of political disturbance ; some put the cause down to political ambitions of individuals and groups. Whatever may be the cause of such changes abroad, women in this country must feel a deep sense of thankfulness and pride that Great Britain has come through her economic crisis without any such violent upheaval. The fact that ours has been a National Government has given us a sense of security that is doubly precious in the light of the happenings in other countries. If it were for no other reason than this, history would find a place of distinction in its annals for a Prime Minister and a Government that guided the country through such perilous times on a policy of uniting the nation.

The crisis of 1931 had brought the country to a dangerous pass. Now, in 1935, we see recovery in almost every aspect of national life. We see the restoration of confidence in the financial world, and definite and remarkable progress in

trade and employment, and with them such a measure of reassurance and tranquillity that we forget how near we were to the brink of disaster only four years ago.

But how easy it is to plunge from such a crisis into chaos or revolution is obvious from a slight glance at the history of other countries.

Germany has known the Nazi revolution. The story of religious persecution, of massacre, of concentration camps, of political and religious refugees, has been the grimmest in the history of one of the leading nations of the world, and has filled the minds, even of Germany's friends, with horror and dismay. There is no need to dwell on the details; the events are too recent and too deeply impressed on us for any to have forgotten them. Suffice it to say that, in the welter of persecution, personal and political freedom, the most cherished of all liberties to Englishmen and Englishwomen, has disappeared from Germany.

Austria, also, has known the terrors and distress of civil war, attacks on her working classes, the assassination of her Chancellor by Nazi terrorists, and the dangers of internal disintegration, and even of invasion.

Russia had her revolution in 1917, and although at the outset many people in Europe acclaimed the end of the Tzarist régime, they, in their turn, became aghast at the horrors which unfortunately almost always follow in the wake of revolution. Almost twenty years have had to pass before Russia has been able to settle down.

Italy had her Fascist revolution in 1922, and within the last two years Yugo-Slavia and France, as well as Austria, have suffered at the hands of assassins and terrorists. There

has been serious rioting in the streets of Paris, and, more recently, political revolution and fighting in Greece.

The story of the trouble in the United States of America is of a different nature, but sufficiently grim and unhappy. There the economic chaos and social distress have been so great that revolution might easily have followed, if a strong hand had not been at the helm. The crisis through which we passed in 1931 had many points of similarity with the United States' crisis, but fortunately for us, ours had a happier solution. The United States' "slump" and the collapse of her banks spread untold misery throughout the country. Revolution could scarcely have brought more economic distress than Americans have experienced during the last few years. As a result of the depression there was already in existence a large body of unemployed: now this was enormously increased. People who had been fabulously rich became paupers overnight. Their families became destitute, and when they looked for work they found themselves merely part of the army of over ten million unemployed. Women in England can scarcely realise the misfortunes that befell thousands of American women during that period, misfortunes from which they have not yet recovered, and perhaps never will.

There has been dictatorship in Russia, Italy, Germany, and Austria, and other countries of Europe, and even in the United States (the home of Democracy and of the Rights of Man). We in Great Britain should be thankful to have passed through this grave world crisis without loss of our political liberty. Great Britain, practically alone of all the nations, has kept her order and tranquillity in a shaking world.

English women will realise that such security cannot be a matter of luck. Revolution has been in the air; the seeds have fallen wherever the soil was ready. That we in Great Britain have been saved from the fate of other nations is due to the careful, wise steering of the Government in power. If the man at the helm, and the loyal co-operation of the crew, had not together steered the ship of State clear of the shoals of danger in the autumn of 1931, we too might have been drawn into the vortex of revolution, or of economic disaster.

II

To women, the political conditions in foreign countries are often less interesting than their social conditions and their mode of living.

Poverty and want have followed so close on the heels of economic disaster in the United States of America that it was estimated that during the last winter, 1934-1935, more than twenty million people, or about one-sixth of the total population, were on the relief registers !

In Germany, an official survey (published in June 1934) was made of the earnings of fifteen million workers. This probably represents all, or the great majority, of the workers in the whole of Germany. In this survey it was stated that half of the workers received earnings ranging from fourteen shillings and fivepence to twenty-eight shillings and tenpence per week. Fewer than one out of every hundred received more than fifty-two shillings and tenpence; 13 per cent. received fourteen shillings and fivepence or less, per week. From these earnings had to be taken taxes, insurance, and deductions for other purposes. In the German textile

industry male spinners earned twenty-nine shillings per week, women spinners ten shillings and fourpence per week. Deductions for social insurance and for State taxes amount to about 12 per cent. The subscriptions that have to be paid to various organisations are considerable, and contributions are also expected to various collections. Many of these contributions and subscriptions are deducted at source, and it has been estimated, according to an official publication, that a clerk earning a salary of fourteen pounds per month, retains only ten pounds four shillings for himself, fifty-seven shillings and threepence being deducted for taxes and social insurance, and the remaining eighteen shillings and ninepence for collections. Further, it was estimated that the average gross earnings per week of spinners had fallen so greatly that in 1933 it was 22 per cent. lower than in 1927.

By comparison with English workers, therefore, the wages of German workers are very low, many of them indeed do not receive more than, if as much as, unemployed men in this country drawing insurance benefit.

In France wages have always been lower than in England, and remain so. They have not decreased to any great extent (by 6·4 per cent. since 1930); but as an offset is the fact that the cost of living is surprisingly high.

In January 1934 the following were some of the retail prices in Paris:

	£	s.	d.
Beef steak (lb.)	2	11	
Eggs, fresh (each)		3	2
Coal, kitchen (ton)	4	12	0
Bacon, streaky (lb.)		3	0
Butter (lb.)		2	6

The reverse is the case in Italy. The cost of living has decreased by 15 per cent., but wages have decreased far beyond this in proportion. In many industries they have been reduced by 20-40 per cent. Nor is it likely that this is merely a temporary measure, for Signor Mussolini, in an announcement made in the spring of 1934, said: "To bring down the internal cost of production to that of world prices, Italian workmen must be prepared to take lower wages and thereby find more work."

In England there had been, it is true, a decline in wages since 1927. But the decline never reached the proportions of those in foreign countries, and wages, to start with, in this country had been appreciably higher. Moreover, 1934 saw this decline checked; and subsequently a definite rise in wages in a number of industries.

There have been, in addition, increases in wages for adult male labourers in twenty-eight counties in England and Wales benefiting two hundred and fifty-one thousand agricultural workers to the extent of an increase of eight hundred and nineteen thousand five hundred pounds a year. Youths and women engaged in agricultural work are also receiving increased wages.

The cost of living, too, has decreased. So far as food items are concerned, the food that cost twenty-three shillings and fivepence in 1930 would only cost twenty shillings at the present day. There is a similar, although not such a great, decrease in the cost of living in other respects, in such things as rent, clothing, fuel, and light, where it is estimated that twenty shillings will now go as far as twenty-two shillings and threepence in 1930.

All these points are of importance to women in particular. A comfortable house, good and cheap food, good and cheap clothing, security in the home and in the manner in which they live—these are the things that housewives want in this, as in any other country.

Another instance of the general improvement in the welfare of the working people lies in the fact that workers' savings have increased by about two hundred and fifty million pounds since 1931.

CHAPTER IX

WOMEN AND THE CITY

WOMEN are often credited with taking no interest in the City or in the world of finance. Men are content to tell women they know nothing about money matters, and leave it at that. But hundreds of thousands of women are closely connected with the City in one way or another. Numbers hold shares in financial concerns, numbers work in the City, and still greater numbers have husbands, fathers, brothers, or sons who work there. Further, although the City, geographically, is confined to a comparatively small area around the Bank of England and Throgmorton Street, branches of the larger City firms, and ramifications of the City's activities, spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. The "City" is the nerve centre of the whole of the financial and industrial world of the United Kingdom, for industry depends essentially upon finance, and, as every woman knows, something fundamentally wrong with the nerve centre will affect the whole of the nervous system and the whole health of the body.

To talk glibly, therefore, of the "City" as being of no importance to women is basically misleading, for thousands, if not millions, of women depend for their living either directly or indirectly on the City's smooth working.

To begin with, there are the City workers. It is estimated that over a million persons enter the City daily for their

work. Many of these are heads of families, and earn their living as important (or unimportant) officials of City firms.

The City is the home of the biggest banks and insurance companies of the country, employing throughout the country, as well as in London, thousands of people, from bank managers and other important bank officials to hundreds of messengers. One of the "Big Five" banks alone employs about one and a half million people. Between them the "Big Five" banks have over eight thousand five hundred branches in different parts of the country, and hold deposits from the public amounting to the vast sum of nearly one thousand eight hundred million pounds. The banks are the trustees for the money of the Friendly Societies, and these are the direct trustees for hundreds of millions of pounds of working-class savings. The depositors in the banks are, in fact, the British public—the British nation.

This necessarily implies a close connection, directly or indirectly, between the majority of women in the country, the banks and, by dint of logical reasoning, the City.

From the woman's point of view, be she wife, mother or daughter, the smooth running of the City means confidence about the earnings of her menfolk, on which, of course, the maintenance of our homes depend. It means safety for family savings, and peace of mind for thousands of people for the present and for the future. If the City collapsed, if City firms closed down and banks failed, the result would be catastrophe for hundreds of thousands, if not for millions of homes. This may sound sensational and ridiculous. But we have merely to be reminded of what happened in America at the time of the failure of American banks, of the ruin that

befell millions of her population, to realise that such disasters *do* take place, even in the most progressive and prosperous of countries.

The nation, after all, is only a single household on a larger, on a national, scale. It is no exaggeration to say that the whole nation depends upon a satisfactory state of business in the City. Should the credit of the City become unstable, and remain so, it would affect the whole financial edifice of the nation.

Instinctively we feel that what happened in the United States could not happen here. But that optimism, although we may not realise it, is based upon our confidence in the Government, and in our institutions.

As we all know, what one may call the City's barometer is a very delicate one. Any and every political disturbance has its influence on the City.

For example, the result of the election at Wavertree in the spring of 1935 was reflected by uneasiness in the City. The reason for this is easy to see. The National Government has restored confidence and stability, and has enabled the City to recover from the shock of 1931, when the whole financial structure of the country seemed in danger of collapse. The years during which the Government has been in office have been a heaven-sent boon to the City. Tranquillity has returned with the return of confidence; trade has greatly increased. Not only has our credit abroad been re-established, but our prestige has been enormously enhanced by the fact that we turned the corner without any violent upheaval in our way of government. That Great Britain is the first of the large nations to recover from the world

depression, and to show that tranquillity and prosperity and good finance can be restored, has set a cheering and encouraging example to the rest of the world. The City is keenly aware of this, and because the National Government "saved" the City, the City feels that its continued safety and tranquillity lies with such a Government. The City is, therefore, apprehensive of anything that might, even remotely, suggest a disintegrating influence.

It is no secret, as one of our leading newspapers pointed out, that during March of 1935 it needed only Mr. MacDonald's recovery from a cold, and his return to 10 Downing Street, to put an end to disturbing rumours of the break-up of the Cabinet, that were circulating in the City, and to steady the financial market.

On every side in the City expressions of gratitude may be heard for the work of the Prime Minister and of the National Government in restoring confidence and order, and in bringing about the return of prosperity.

The City is undoubtedly of opinion that a National Government, which represents as nearly as possible the general feeling of the country in the union of parties, is more likely to produce tranquillity, a continuity of policy, and consequently a steadying influence, than a party Government that necessarily brings a sense of transitoriness and unsettlement in its train.

It would be easy to quote at length from spokesmen of the Labour Party to show what would, in their opinion, happen in the City if they were now returned to power. Two quotations are enough to show the Labour leaders' own forecast of the effect of such an event.

Sir Stafford Cripps definitely foretells an acute crisis in the City. In November 1934 he said :

“I cannot imagine the Labour Party coming into power without a first-rate financial crisis.”

In March 1935 Mr. Lansbury said :

“There might be a crisis in the City of London: the banks might collapse, but that would not be the nation collapsing, although it might react on the nation.”

In justice to moderate Labour men, it is only fair to suggest that their Labour leaders themselves may have exaggerated what would be the effects on the City of the coming into power of their government. But there are, nevertheless, numbers of Labour people who will not deny that a crisis would be bound to take place, and would accept it as an inevitable accompaniment of Labour rule.

It is, then, necessary to face again the question that so many of us, whether we be men or women, directly or indirectly connected with the City, have had to put to ourselves. “Can we—women, men, or the nation—afford such a crisis—now—or in the near future?”

That the country is bound to return sooner or later to party politics is inevitable and probably desirable. That the effects of that return are bound to react on the City is also inevitable. The question is, “Are we ready now for that return?” “Have we recovered sufficiently from the crisis of 1931 to be able to withstand a fresh one?” It is not a question of political allegiance, of whether our opinions are Labour, Liberal or Conservative. The question that matters is whether we are National in our views, in the sense of putting the nation ahead of party; whether we are prepared

to go on restoring the country's fortunes and its good name, with which our domestic welfare is inevitably wrapped up; or whether we are prepared to take the risk of reverting to party government with its attendant repercussions on the City, and with the possibility of the crisis that Labour leaders themselves do not hesitate to foretell.

CHAPTER X

SAFETY FIRST IN THE STREETS

EVERY woman would like to pay a tribute to the Minister of Transport ! Many people before him have been appalled by the weekly death-roll from traffic disasters and the numbers of persons injured in motor accidents, but very few active measures had been taken for the safety of the public.

Mr. Hore-Belisha's beacons and his thirty-mile-an-hour limit have come in for a certain amount of criticism. But not even the most persistent critic can deny that now, for the first time, the problem of the safety of the pedestrian (and of motorists) is being tackled seriously and with courage. One experiment after another is being tried—Belisha Beacons, Traffic Lights, and Pedestrian Crossings—until the pedestrian feels that he can walk in safety, and a mother with her children can cross the roads without the terrifying feeling that she has their lives in her hand. It is to be hoped that in the near future such a measure of safety will be reached that children by themselves will be able to cross the roads safely, thereby relieving the worried minds of many thousands of mothers whose children have of necessity to cross roads on their way to and from school.

The Ministry of Transport's Order for the silencing of motor hooters in and around London after 11.30 p.m.,

though this, too, came in for criticism, is proving a wise and beneficial measure.

The shrieking of these hooters meant disturbed sleep for thousands of people, and was considerably affecting their nerves and health. Ours is a nervous, restless age, and as leading medical men, and Lord Horder in particular, have pointed out, the evils of noise are deep and far-reaching, and an important contributory cause of ill-health. It was essential, Lord Horder said, that we, as a people, should try to recapture more quietness and repose.

As a result of the Silence Order, the streets and the whole metropolis have become much quieter in the daytime as well as during the night. The motorist, not allowed to sound his hooters and sirens after 11.30 at night, has found that he must drive more carefully. The habit once formed, he is now finding that he can drive more carefully during the day, without recourse to his dreadful ear-splitting noises. To a person who has been away from London for some time, the change is remarkable.

All those people who are in bed by 11.30 p.m.—and these include children, the great majority of mothers and the manual and city workers, to say nothing of professional men and women, who have to be up early the next morning—have joined the chorus of those who say “Thank you” to the Minister of Transport.

I feel that I can quote my mother-in-law, an active woman, over seventy years of age, as speaking for an army of other women.

“I am so grateful to Mr. Hore-Belisha,” she said; “now I feel that I can cross the roads in safety. At my age I have

to be careful. Until we had the beacons and the new rules, I used to be terrified of the traffic. Now all the motor drivers seem suddenly to have become so considerate and polite !”—an “unsolicited testimonial” to the Ministry of Transport !

CHAPTER XI

WORKING FOR PEACE

WOMEN are always, instinctively, on the side of Peace ! With the horrors of the Great War fresh in our minds, and with the knowledge that our sons are growing up to strength and manhood, is there any cause for wonder that this is so ?

“What, then,” asks the average woman, “has the National Government done for the promotion of peace ?”

To that question there is an immediate and direct reply. The National Government has been in the forefront of every effort to promote peace. It has set a high example of unilateral disarmament to the rest of the world. It has been a whole-hearted supporter of the League of Nations, and by its persistent and untiring efforts is always seeking to give a lead to Europe and to bring about international harmony and understanding.

I

Every international crisis settled by agreement and not by force is a step towards better things, and at a time when the international situation is difficult and uncertain, it is doubly important to remember what has been accomplished by sound statesmanship and negotiation.

The dispute between Yugo-Slavia and Hungary that arose out of the assassination of King Alexander and M.

Barthou, and the plebiscite to be taken in the Saar district, were both situations so highly charged with combustible material that the slightest tremor might have caused a conflagration.

The wise and skilful handling of both these difficult questions at Geneva, and the news that British troops were to be sent to maintain order during the voting in the Saar district, produced an immediately quieting effect.

Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, whose championship of world peace, through the League of Nations, has won him the admiration and gratitude of all peace-loving peoples, said in December 1934:

“A month ago I would have taken a gloomy view of the international situation. It seemed then that nations were drifting away from the League, and there was in prospect a very serious outlook. The position is now very much better. We have seen the British Government giving a vigorous lead at Geneva. . . . The decision to send an international force to keep order in the Saar was of the utmost wisdom. Scarcely less important had been the successful attempt of the League to induce Hungary and Yugo-Slavia to accept a precise and definite resolution which gave the utmost hope that the very dangerous controversy which had arisen between these two countries would be settled.”

The Times wrote (December 15th, 1934): “We wish respectfully to congratulate His Majesty’s Government on the two conspicuous successes achieved in the cause of international conciliation by their effective assistance in policing the Saar and their initiative in composing the differences between the states of Yugo-Slavia and Hungary. It is a

source of pride to us that our Government have assumed the leadership in making effective in Europe the principles of collective security."

The *News Chronicle* said: "The brilliant handling of the bitter and dangerous controversy between Yugo-Slavia and Hungary has reflected deserved credit on the principal peace-makers—Mr. Eden, M. Laval, and Prince Paul of Yugo-Slavia—and it is on the whole the most dramatic triumph yet won by the system of which the League of Nations is the expression."

Mr. George Lansbury, Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, paid a tribute to the Government in Parliament when he said (December 11th, 1934): "I am sure that every Member in the House will congratulate our Minister . . . on the part he has played in these transactions."

Foreign opinions on the subject are also interesting and encouraging.

The *Pester Lloyd* of Budapest wrote on December 11th, 1934: "Mr. Eden displayed to good advantage his brilliant statesmanlike talents, and he upheld in praiseworthy fashion the most distinguished characteristics of British policy, namely, an absolute fairness of viewpoint and an unbiased objectivity."

The Hungarian journal, *Magyarsag*, wrote on the same day: "It is impossible to forget those generous and unselfish services which the representative of the mighty British Empire and the powerful English Press have rendered to a just and good cause and to the interest of European peace."

The differences between Yugo-Slavia and Hungary, which, if they had been allowed to ferment, might have had the

direst consequences for South-eastern Europe, were dispelled. Thanks to the presence of British and other neutral troops in the Saar district, the people's vote was taken there without any disturbance.

More important, even, than the actual words and actions of the British Government at this time, was the feeling that Great Britain was again assuming her old rôle as the mediator of Europe, a rôle for which her position as a member of a World Commonwealth, as well as a European nation, makes her peculiarly fitted.

After much small chatter Europe heard Britain speaking again with her great voice, and the effect was incalculable.

II

DISARMAMENT

What have been the efforts of the National Government to secure international disarmament through the League of Nations? It is worth looking at the facts.

The World Disarmament Conference was set up in February 1932, when the National Government had been in office six months. Its President was British, Mr. Arthur Henderson, and from the very beginning President and Conference have had the unswerving support of the Government, without which the Disarmament Conference could hardly have survived.

The three years of the Disarmament Conference's existence have coincided with some of the most dangerous and troublous periods in Europe's history. The rise to power of

the Nazi Party in Germany was followed by the German withdrawal from the League. France, always fearful of Germany at her doors, became still more alarmed at what she saw of Nazi militarism. Germany's other neighbours, particularly Austria, became equally alarmed, and a general feeling of uneasiness spread over Europe. In such an atmosphere the only surprising thing is that the Disarmament Conference did not die entirely.

The British Government gave the lead to the Disarmament Conference at the very outset by urging the necessity for agreement on practical points in disarmament, and by laying down certain principles with regard to "qualitative and quantitative disarmament." The Conference adopted these principles on the lines laid down by the British Government.

By July 1932 the British Government had drawn up definite detailed proposals for Great Britain's own disarmament in the Navy, Army, and Air Service, and these, when submitted to the Conference, were taken as the basis for the future discussions.

In December of that year (1932), before the Conference met in second session, Germany, now under the dictatorship of Herr Hitler, announced that she was withdrawing from further negotiations. It was due almost entirely to the British Government's efforts that Germany was prevailed upon to alter her mind and to remain a member of the Conference. But for this intervention the Disarmament Conference would, probably, have broken up before its second session!

The year 1933 opened ominously. The second session reached deadlock in February, and again there were signs of

its breaking up. Again the Conference was saved by the British Government, which drew up and submitted a Draft Disarmament Convention. The British Draft Convention was considered in June. There was not a single hostile vote, and the Conference adopted it as "the basis of the future Convention."

The year was not a successful one, and in spite of all efforts, Germany withdrew from the Conference in October 1933.

In January 1934 the British Government submitted a new Memorandum particularly framed to bring France and Germany to a more friendly relationship. Renewed efforts to bring about a harmony of ideas was made in April 1934, when the British Government sent Mr. Eden to Paris, Berlin, and Rome to elaborate the points in the Memorandum and to endeavour again to conciliate France and Germany. Great Britain's efforts met with no success. France indicated in her reply that the German Government had made negotiations impossible by her increase of armaments. Deadlock ensued between the two countries, with the result that the Disarmament Conference could do little more than determine to "continue investigations already undertaken" and hope for better things.

Throughout the proceedings of the Conference, the British Government had been more sincerely and heartily in favour of disarmament than any other country. Not only did she use her best efforts to try to produce a friendly atmosphere between France and Germany, but by scaling down her own armaments she set a noteworthy example to Europe and to the rest of the world.

These honest efforts for the cause of disarmament have been widely recognised.

To quote, as examples, three speakers from widely different spheres :

Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, in the House of Lords, November 29th, 1932, speaking in connection with the proposals submitted by the British Government in July of that year, said :

“ The proposals of the British Government are based on three principles. I believe that these principles are right ; indeed, I go so far as to say that the acceptance of these proposals is the only road to a successful issue of the Disarmament Conference. I am a supporter, generally speaking of the Government policy.”

In March 1933, at Geneva, M. de Madariaga, the principal Spanish delegate, said :

“ The Spanish delegation desired to associate itself with all those who had come to the platform to pay a tribute to the United Kingdom delegation, and in particular to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, for the great service they had rendered to the cause of disarmament, and in particular to the Conference.”

A year later, in March 1934, the Rev. Dr. Scott Lidgett, then President of the United Methodist Church, said :

“ We are convinced that but for the patience, persistence, and pertinacity of the British Government there would have been no chance whatever for the Disarmament Conference.”

III

UNILATERAL DISARMAMENT AND SECURITY

The Government's most earnest efforts have been directed towards ensuring peace and towards a Disarmament Convention. But the Government of a country is responsible for that country's security, and it is worth considering the causes behind the famous "White Paper" on Defence published by the Prime Minister in the spring of 1935.

The facts and factors that made this paper necessary are probably known to most readers, but, as Lady Astor remarked, "Peace was essentially a woman's question," and certain aspects of that question cannot too often be mentioned.

The majority of women do not need further evidence of the Government's honest endeavour to bring about a more peaceful state of the world. The Government has not only talked Disarmament, it has acted Disarmament, time and time again, in the hope that its example would be followed by other countries.

The Washington Five Power Treaty for the Limitation of Naval Armaments of 1922, and the London Naval Treaty of 1930, put an important check to the growth of naval armaments.

England's policy since these treaties had been, not to increase, but only to replace her defences. In actual practice this replacement had been made on the most meagre scale, a great proportion of old-fashioned, worn-out armaments being allowed to remain, and even to decay. This, as Mr. Baldwin pointed out in the House of Commons on March

11th, 1935, was done deliberately, to set a definite example to other countries. It was hoped that if Great Britain, the oldest and greatest naval Power, chose deliberately to neglect her Navy, it would help to create a more pacific spirit in the world, and so might bring success to a concerted effort for world disarmament. Great Britain's example and gesture were ignored.

The Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 was the greatest step towards disarmament by agreement that had been reached since 1918. The Treaty was to remain in force until one of the signatories gave notice to terminate it. Notice was given to this effect by Japan last December, and the Japanese are planning large increases in their naval strength.

Under this Treaty and the London Naval Treaty of 1930 the limits to which the Naval Powers could go in their building was specified. Great Britain has not built up to these limits, but other nations, notably the United States and Japan, have done so.

The British Government has also tried to abolish submarines, and to reduce the size of battleships and cruisers, but Britain's efforts have been unsuccessful and her example ignored.

The personnel of the British Navy at the Armistice was four hundred and fifteen thousand. This was reduced in the years succeeding the war to one hundred and two thousand. In March 1935 it had reached a figure which, as Mr. Baldwin pointed out in Parliament, was the lowest in the country for forty years.

With regard to the Army, similar steps had been taken to encourage disarmament by example.

In 1919-20 the Army (not including those serving in India) numbered two million five hundred thousand. It had come down to one hundred and fifty-two thousand; 20 per cent. smaller than before the War.

To those women to whom facts mean more than theories, these facts prove conclusively that Great Britain has persistently followed a policy of disarmament, despite discouragement and the lack of support from other nations.

Japan has doubled her army expenses in the last four years. Russia has now one of the finest armies in the world, and an immense air force. Russia's increases continue and her Budget estimates also increase.

The question we had to ask ourselves was this. How much farther could Great Britain have gone *alone* in the matter of disarmament? Could this unilateral disarmament have been continued until Great Britain stood alone among the nations without national defence?

Great Britain had voluntarily cut down her armaments in every sphere—navy, army, and in the air—to a far greater extent than any other nation. She did this in the hope that her action would set an example to the rest of the world. This has been a policy pursued by one British Government after another since the Armistice. But Great Britain's example has not been followed by the other countries. "How far, then," to repeat the question, "could Great Britain go?" Should she continue the policy of disarming to such a degree that not only would her defences be in a state of decay, but her navy, army, and air force would be entirely abolished? That is the view taken by some critics of the Government who believe that the nation should disarm

entirely and remain quite defenceless, regardless of the fact that we should be alone in so doing, while other nations are continuing to re-arm. If the example of Great Britain's partial disarmament had not been followed, would her complete disarmament have been effective? Such a course would certainly be quixotic, but would it be helpful to the cause of Peace? Would two countries whose Governments had brought them to the verge of war be stopped by the fact that Great Britain had disarmed? And, in the present state of European politics, would Great Britain's voice be so effective if it had no military strength at all to back it? Of what value would such a voice be against an aggressor? Finally, what of her own safety if she were attacked? Would total disarmament prevent an enemy from attacking her shores? These are but a few of the questions that leap to the mind at the thought of continuing this policy of one-sided disarmament.

It is worth seeing what critics of the present Government have said when they themselves filled positions of responsibility.

"One-sided disarmament may be magnificent," said Sir Herbert Samuel, "but it is not peace." Mr. A. V. Alexander, who was First Lord of the Admiralty in the last Labour Government, said in May 1930: "I am all for peace and disarmament, but not for unilateral disarmament. I am not for disarmament by this country alone." In the following year, in April 1931, he said: "The people of this country must not hide from themselves the fact that no nation in the world has yet made a relatively larger contribution to disarmament than this country has done."

In March 1931, in Parliament, Mr. Tom Shaw, then War Minister in the Labour Government, said:

"It is impossible for me to recommend to the Government any further unilateral disarmament because *the figures are against it, experience is against it, and, in my opinion, the prospects of the future are against it.*¹ The chances of disarmament are against unilateral disarmament as a policy."

It is not necessary to discuss the stages by which other countries have been increasing their arms, and what countries seem to be fostering a definite military spirit. The question of how far unilateral disarmament could continue had to be determined, and it was the conviction that it had gone far enough that led to the famous White Paper on Armaments of March 1935.

The White Paper, while reiterating strongly Great Britain's undeviating support of the League of Nations, stated that the Government's aim was to *replenish and bring up to date* the national defences.

Without going into the "pros" and "cons" of the case, there are one or two questions worth asking. How far is the Government responsible to the nation for the national safety? If responsible, can the Government afford to neglect the nation's defences? These are questions that Sir Herbert Samuel seemed to ask, but did not answer, in his speech in the debate in the House of Commons. Lord Reading asked them, in effect, when the debate took place in the House of Lords, and answered them by voting for the National Government.

If the Labour Party were in office, could they assume

¹ Italics are mine.

the responsibility for neglecting to repair the country's defences?

In this connection, it is interesting to hear the succinct remarks of Mr. Bernard Shaw. "The Prime Minister's position," he says, "is perfectly correct. If we are to have any armament at all—and any party suggesting that we should do without one would give Mr. MacDonald a walk-over at the next election even more complete than he had at the last one—it must be up to the very latest mark. The Pacifist who calls on Mr. MacDonald to disarm the nation is quite in order, though he is also outside politics. But the Muddler who says, 'If we must have guns and battleships, let us at least have old-fashioned and worn-out ones,' is outside common sanity. . . . Mr. MacDonald said, 'Let us repair the defences of the nation.' Instead of saying, 'Certainly,' and giving the Labour Party its share in the general approval, the Labour Party said, 'We must oppose because we are the Opposition,' and thereby puts itself hopelessly in the wrong."

The White Paper has the initials of Mr. MacDonald, Prime Minister at the time, and all who know Mr. MacDonald know, too, how close at heart he has the cause of Peace. Peace has been the dominating aim of his whole life, and he is not merely a peace-lover, but a peace-worker. From the time of the Treaty of Versailles he has worked to get rid of those sections of the Treaty which were most burdensome to Germany. Throughout he has striven to bring Germany into the concert of Europe. It would be no exaggeration to say that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's influence in Europe, and his visit to Geneva in 1924, which made such a vast impression on the minds of European statesmen,

paved the way for the Treaty of Locarno and for the entry of Germany into the League of Nations, the first great step to end the post-war period. Time and again, Great Britain has in the past given evidence of friendship towards Germany.

“ Since the Armistice,” said *The Observer* on March 22nd, 1935, “ this country, in particular, has given a thousand unreciprocated proofs of goodwill. We have worked for the complete moral liquidation of the War. . . . [The] worst features [of the Treaty of Versailles] were the financial clauses. They were wiped out largely owing to the heroic exertions of the Prime Minister (Mr. Ramsay MacDonald), whose name is never mentioned with gratitude by the beneficiaries. The evacuation of the Rhineland was carried out five years in advance of the treaty limit ; the retrocession of the Saar was facilitated in the most frank and cordial spirit ; not to speak of the continual reduction of the former relative power of Britain.”

Since the White Paper was published and discussed in Parliament, Germany's military plans and her military strength have been revealed. Now, even the most sanguine idealists can have no doubt that Great Britain's unilateral disarmament has had no effect whatsoever on Nazi policy. There is conclusive evidence that Germany has been making her private military plans for some time past. Not even the most zealous of pacifists can feel that the mild terms of the British White Paper could have been the cause of provoking Germany to this defiant and aggressive declaration.

IV

EMBARGOES ON ARMS

In another praiseworthy direction the Government has taken an isolated stand, again in the hope that Britain's example would be followed.

In 1933 the British Government placed an embargo on the export of arms to China and Japan. No other country followed her example. Hostilities continued between China and Japan, since both countries could get arms elsewhere. As Great Britain's effort was nullified by the attitude of other countries, the embargo was removed.

The Government was more successful with the next embargo. In an endeavour to end the war that had long raged in the Gran Chaco between Bolivia and Paraguay, the British Government, after strenuous efforts, induced twenty-eight nations, including the United States, to follow their example, and stop the export of arms and munitions to both countries. A Special Assembly of the League of Nations proposed a settlement of the dispute. Bolivia accepted the terms, but Paraguay rejected them. In the true spirit of the Covenant, and in order to support and strengthen the action of the League, the embargo on the export of arms was withdrawn, so far as Bolivia was concerned, but retained with regard to Paraguay, the country that had refused to accept the settlement.

In March 1935 the delegate of the British Government at Geneva made a forcible plea for the tightening up of the embargo on Paraguay in order to stop the Gran Chaco War. He appealed to the countries bordering on Bolivia and

Paraguay to stop the transit of arms, and to the League Chaco Committee to redouble its efforts and enforce the strength of the League. The French Government on the same day announced that she would follow Great Britain's lead with regard to the arms embargo on Paraguay. The precedent and example set by the British Government in this matter is an important one, not only in the general cause of peace, but in showing that the League has the backing of powerful countries.

V

REPARATIONS

It is very largely due to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald that "Reparations," as a word, has disappeared from the European vocabulary. The Lausanne Conference of 1932, which ended the Reparations trouble, could never have succeeded if it had not been for Mr. MacDonald's consummate skill, patience, and clever handling of delicate situations, which saved the Conference, time and again, when it was on the point of floundering. Although suffering from serious eye trouble, he worked literally day and night to conciliate the opposing French and German points of view. One English observer wrote: "Throughout, he toiled with almost superhuman energy to keep the Conference from shipwreck." *The Times* wrote on July 5th: "Pride is felt in this country at the manner in which Mr. MacDonald has been presiding over an immensely important Conference"; while on July 9th, when the Lausanne Treaty was drawn up, *The Times* said: "From to-day onward the reparation system, which has

contributed so much to the economic confusion of Europe and the world, ceases to exist. The first part of the War Debts problem has been solved. A poison has been extracted from the economic system of Europe."

Germany, above all countries, benefited financially by the Lausanne Treaty: her payment of reparations ceased; she benefited psychologically, too, for she saw clearly demonstrated the fact that Europe was anxious to show friendship towards her. "All the statesmen who have brought about this most satisfactory agreement," to continue the article already quoted, "deserve unstinted gratitude, but the British public, following the example of the King, will naturally be inclined to congratulate first and foremost its own Prime Minister, who has greatly enhanced a reputation already gained as a chairman of international gatherings. 'Conference maketh a ready man,' as Francis Bacon observed, and Mr. MacDonald has appeared to combine suggestion with firmness, and patience with driving power in just the right proportions."

VI

FURTHER STEPS TOWARDS PEACE

The Air Pact, proposed in February 1935 between France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, and Great Britain, was acclaimed by all parties at the time as the greatest step made towards collective peace since the Locarno Treaties. It was a determined effort to allay the fears felt in every nation of a sudden attack by air, a particularly dangerous menace in view of the enormous speed and range of modern aircraft, and one to which the British Isles is dangerously exposed. The

Pact was, moreover, a whole-hearted gesture towards Germany, meant to bring her once again into line with the other European countries, and if possible to get her to rejoin the League of Nations.

The spring of this year was memorable for the series of "conversations" held between Ministers of the National Government and European Nations. No Government or country has made a more determined effort than Great Britain to bring a feeling of true friendship and harmony into a distraught world. The visit of Sir John Simon and Mr. Anthony Eden to Berlin, though it revealed what was in the mind of Herr Hitler, cannot, unfortunately, be regarded as having had a satisfactory issue. But the visits of Mr. Eden to Moscow, Warsaw, and Prague were of a much happier nature. Particularly was this the case with regard to Mr. Stalin's warm welcome to Mr. Eden in Moscow. The uneasiness that had been aroused by the Berlin visit was counterbalanced by the assurances our Minister received that Russia was as anxious to preserve the peace of Europe as any loyal League adherent could desire.

The Conference held at Stresa in April 1935 was attended by three Prime Ministers, Mr. MacDonald, Signor Mussolini, and M. Flandin. By the firm solidarity shown by Italy, France, and Great Britain, and by the reiteration of their support of the League of Nations, the Stresa Conference gave a further striking example of the desire of these countries to procure peace in Europe through international co-operation. The solidarity of these three nations, and their expressed determination to uphold the principle of collective security, made the Conference one of the utmost importance.

VII

When the history of these times comes to be written, posterity will have to decide what practical steps were actually taken by the National Government in pursuance of its policy of peace.

It will read a fine record—of effort, of negotiation, and of example.

It will see the moral influence of Great Britain exerted always towards a just and a lasting settlement.

Whatever the future may be—and it would be foolish to deny that the outlook is perilous and uncertain—we in this country will be able to feel with pride that the National Government's loyal support has always been given to the League of Nations, that their efforts have always been directed towards peace. This is a record that every woman must regard with gratitude ! History and posterity will note that through these dangerous years Britain's Government was not only National in name but in spirit, and that the finest qualities of the British nation were shown in its efforts and achievement.

APPENDICES

CHAPTER II

DEFICITS IN THE BUDGETS OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES

IN the United States of America there was a huge deficit at the end of the financial year of £797,800,000, which is £167,000,000 greater than any deficit they have had before in peace time.

Italy had to face a deficit in June 1934, the end of the financial year, of about £62,000,000. The Italian Cabinet decided to make a general cut in the salaries of members of the Government, of civil servants and employees of public bodies. These cuts varied from 5 per cent. for those earning between £2 and £4 a week, and 20 per cent. for Cabinet Ministers.

France had been faced with the enormous deficit of £680,000,000, but to prevent this she passed the Decree Laws in February 1934 enacting a number of economies which included:

(1) A reduction of the *number* of civil servants by 10 per cent., implying the compulsory retirement of 80,000 persons.

(2) Reductions in the salaries of civil servants, 10 per cent. on the higher salaries, 5 per cent. on smaller salaries (and salaries on the whole in France are considerably lower, even for the highest paid officials, than they are in England).

(3) A 3 per cent. reduction on pensions for disabled ex-soldiers.

By these Decree Laws France hopes that she will achieve a surplus to her next budget of £480,000, but undoubtedly the new laws involve severe financial retrenchments for thousands of families throughout France.

In Germany likewise there was a deficit of about £89,000,000.

Austria, a small country compared with those already mentioned, anticipated a budget deficit of about £2,370,000.

Denmark's Government had an overdraft at the National Bank of £3,555,000, and issued a special loan in January 1934 to meet it.

Holland's deficit was £15,900,000; Hungary's £3,700,000; Poland's, £11,000,000.

Spain, for the second-half alone of 1934, estimated her deficit at £32,000,000, and Sweden has needed £1,700,000 to meet her deficits.

CHAPTER III

INDUSTRY

THE following facts are examples of the general improvement in employment in various industries.

Four hundred and sixty-three new factories were set up in the country in 1933 alone, giving employment to about 30,000 workers.

Unemployment had decreased by 100,000 in the mines in May 1934 as compared with the previous May. Even such industries as the Linen and Carpet trades, which employ at normal times relatively few workers, improved their conditions, unemployment having decreased in the one by 13,500 and being reduced in the other to the figure of 1,518 unemployed.

In the Motor-car industry exports have increased from 19,532 (in 1931) to 36,351 (in 1933), and the unemployed have decreased from 60,318 in August 1931 to 22,681 in May 1934—that is, by almost two-thirds. The sales in the home market have shown a considerable increase.

In the Iron and Steel industry, over a period of two years, from July 1932 to May 1934, 45 more furnaces have been put in blast (making a total of 101 furnaces), with every sign of more being needed in the future. The increase in output has also been considerable, and it is interesting to note that within two and a half years about 170,000 people who were unemployed have been brought back again into employment and our exports within a year have increased by 34,800 tons.

In the Woollen industry trade has increased considerably, and the output which in 1931 was 77 per cent. of the total normal output had grown by 1934 to 96·3 per cent., with corresponding increases in employment. In the Cotton industry also there has been an improvement in unemployment figures.

CHAPTER IV

FINANCIAL TABLES

THE following table shows the increases in wages granted to some of the workers :

<i>Industry.</i>	<i>Number affected</i>	<i>Amount of Increase.</i>
Post Office	200,000	£250,000 for 1935.
Coal	60,000	2d.-8d. a day.
Electricity	10,000	$\frac{1}{2}$ d. an hour.
Gas	130,000	$\frac{1}{4}$ d.- $\frac{1}{2}$ d. an hour.
Railway	500,000	£1,100,000 a year.
London Transport	300,000	£58,000 a year.
Road Transport	80,000	2s. a week.
Dockers	100,000	5d. a day, or $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.
Metal-workers	15,000	1s.-2s. 6d. a week.

The restoration of the cuts in 1934 alone benefited about 1,000,000 employed and 2,000,000 unemployed persons. As this implied in money the releasing by the Government of about £300,000 every week, it followed that there was a great increase in spending power in the country. In addition, with the lowering of Income-tax (in 1934) from 5s. to 4s. 6d. in the £, about 3,500,000 income-tax payers save £24,000,000, which automatically implies a vastly increased spending power.

CHAPTER V

HOUSING

FOR those to whom figures are of interest—and these include many housewives who believe things when they see them and not before—I give the following table from the Ministry of Health's publication:

NUMBER OF HOUSES BUILT						
<i>Year ending.</i>						<i>No. of Houses.</i>
30th September, 1930	.	.	.	.	.	161,699
30th September, 1931	.	.	.	.	.	194,944
30th September, 1932	.	.	.	.	.	201,976
30th September, 1933	.	.	.	.	.	218,313
30th September, 1934	.	.	.	.	.	309,753

CHAPTER VI

THE magnitude of the Government's scheme is most apparent in the light of past achievements :

	<i>Rehoused.</i>
Up to 1914 (from 1875)	108,000 slum dwellers.
1919-1930	70,000 slum dwellers.
1930-1933	34,000 slum dwellers.

making a total of 200,000 over a period of sixty years.

It is hoped by the Five-Year Plan to rehouse 1,246,566 slum dwellers. The comparisons speak for themselves.

The following table shows the number of persons per room allotted according to the Government standard laid down in the Overcrowding Bill :

<i>Number of Rooms.</i>	<i>Permitted No. of Persons.</i>
One	2
Two	3
Three	5
Four	7½, etc.

½ person being equivalent to a child under 10 years of age. In addition to this, a rate of floor area per person is worked out in the Bill which will be taken as the minimum standard.

CHAPTER VII

FREE MILK

IN the spring and summer of 1931 it was estimated that about 110,000 children only were provided with free meals including milk meals; in November 1931 the figure was 117,000. Of these 52,000 were receiving milk alone, or in addition to ordinary meals. In February 1935 about 300,000 children were receiving free meals or milk, 238,000 of whom were receiving milk alone, or in addition to ordinary meals.

By the beginning of 1935 2,500,000 children were receiving purchased milk as against 1,000,000 in October 1934.

The latest figures for Infant Mortality (1933) show a most gratifying drop. They are now down to 64 per 1,000, which is the lowest ever recorded, and 3,000 fewer than in 1932.

CHAPTER XI

PEACE

ITALY has built, in the last year, 2 large battleships, and France, in her turn, is building 2. The naval tonnage of the British Navy is now 48 per cent. smaller than in 1914. The French Navy is 10 per cent. smaller; while the U.S.A. Navy is 17 per cent. greater, the Italian 20 per cent. greater, and the Japanese 35 per cent. greater.

Italy has increased her Air Force by 25 per cent. and the United States have increased their Army air expenses by 39,000,000 dollars. In the air in 1933, Great Britain had 850 machines of First Line strength as compared with 3,300 in 1918. It is estimated that the Russians have 2,500 machines, the French 1,650 machines, the Italian 1,500 machines, and the United States of America over 1,000.

